Loving 'Shape of Water'

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Rockets eye Round 1 with Spurs

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HOUSTON CHRONICLE

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CITY | STATE

2 die when house being lifted collapses

Friends and family were trying to raise a home in Harris County when it collapsed, crushing two men who were working beneath it. **Page A3**

Michael Wyke

The mother of one of the victims is consoled.

NATION

Will tax plan inspire U.S. job growth?

The Republican tax plan is expected to give tens of billions in tax breaks to America's richest multinational companies, but will they spend that windfall on investments that would serve American workers? **Page A8**

BUSINESS

Disney to take on tech giants via megadeal

Disney says it has reached a deal to buy most of the assets of Twenty-First Century Fox in an all-stock transaction valued at roughly $52.4 billion. **Page B1**

COMING SATURDAY

Developing Storm

Fort Bend levees were designed for the 100-year storm, but is it enough? Hurricane Harvey overwhelmed some of those systems, and future storms could do even worse. **Page A1**

As mortgages multiply, fear of foreclosures rises

Mark Mulligan / Houston Chronicle

Valerie Caraway is still waiting for the bulk of her insurance money to pay for Harvey repairs.

Homeowners with Harvey debt treading financial waters

By Nancy Sarnoff

Braeswood homeowner Valerie Caraway had a contractor and a $25,000 insurance check to start fixing up her flooded house. But because the check was made out to her and her mortgage company, she wasn't able to immediately cash it. Two weeks passed before she got the money.

"In my mind I was thinking, 'If I don't get these guys paid they're going to be gone and working on somebody else's house,'" said Caraway, who's living with a neighbor and still waiting for the mortgage company to release additional funds.

> ***"I'm seeing people cutting bait, saying, 'I'm done.' They're just trying to sell for what they owe or look at short sales."***
>
> *Kevin Riles, real estate broker*

More than three months after Hurricane Harvey, flooded Houstonians eager to return home are stuck navigating an unfamiliar world of flood insurance policies, mortgage company procedures and contractor bills.

Many face precarious financial futures as grace periods and forbearance programs come to an end, leaving borrowers with bills three times their monthly mortgage payments.

As the pressure mounts, experts warn of a looming wave of foreclosures.

"I'm seeing people cutting bait, saying, 'I'm done,'" said Kevin Riles, a longtime Houston real estate broker. "They're just trying to sell for what they owe or look at short sales."

Foreclosure Information & Listing Service, a local reporting firm founded in 1963, predicts

Foreclosures continues on A13

Texan drops bid as claims mount

Farenthold accused of lewd behavior, sex harassment

By Kevin Diaz

WASHINGTON — Texas U.S. Rep. Blake Farenthold, facing mounting allegations of sexual harassment and inappropriate behavior, announced Thursday he will not seek re-election in 2018 after acknowledging he had allowed his office to become "decidedly unprofessional."

Farenthold

The announcement, made in a video statement on his campaign's Facebook page, adds the Corpus Christi Republican to a growing list of business leaders, politicians and celebrities laid low by accusations of unseemly behavior or mistreatment of women.

Amid a growing onslaught of revelations involving at least three former staffers — one of them a man — Farenthold's exit was greeted with growing acceptance by Republican leaders.

"I think he's made the right decision that he's going to be leaving Congress, and that reflects some of the conversations we had," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, who spoke to Farenthold several times on Wednesday.

Ethics continues on A13

Others accused

Joe Barton: Texas representative to retire

Al Franken: Minnesota senator to resign

Trent Franks: Arizona representative resigned last week

John Conyers: Michigan representative resigned last week

FCC pulls the plug on net neutrality

Agency says move will help economy; consumers fear competition will fade

By Cecilia Kang
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The Federal Communications Commission voted Thursday to dismantle rules regulating the businesses that connect consumers to the internet, granting broadband companies the power to potentially reshape Americans' online experiences.

The agency scrapped the so-called net neutrality regulations that prohibited broadband providers from blocking websites or charging for higher-quality service or certain content. The federal government will also no longer regulate high-speed internet delivery as if it were a utility, like phone service.

Consumers will not immediately see any of the potential changes, which many consumer groups have argued would include broadband providers selling the internet in bundles, not unlike how cable television is sold today. Under a bundling system, for example, accessing Facebook and Twitter could require paying for a premium so-

FCC continues on A11

» *Competition for internet service providers here is robust.* **Page B1**

'Star Wars' is a family affair

Longtime fans bring memories, kids to screening

By Cary Darling

Friday's opening of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," the latest chapter in the space-opera phenomenon set in "a galaxy far, far away," but which has been a cultural terrestrial touchstone for generations, is an event that could generate a global box-office take approaching a half-billion dollars this weekend.

But for Kristen Lee Ohanyan, it's much more than a big boost to Disney's bottom line. The release of each new film in the famed franchise is a way for her to connect family, going back to the first "Star Wars" in 1977.

"I was eight or nine when I saw it with my grandmother, and that magical moment set things in motion for me," said the Houston teacher and an organizer of the Star Wars Enthusiasts of Houston Facebook and Meetup group. "My grandmother is no longer with us, but she really inspired my love of sci-fi and fantasy."

When Ohanyan watches

'Star Wars' continues on A11

Melissa Phillip / Houston Chronicle

Tony Romero carries drinks as he works dressed as a stormtrooper at King's BierHaus on Wednesday.

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